

THE GARDEN THAT YOU ARE

By Catherine Gordon

Gardener Catherine Gordon presents an uplifting account of eight gardeners who have followed their dreams and passions. The five gardens are all within one square mile of the Slocan Valley, near Winlaw in the Kootenays.

The cultural backgrounds of the gardeners range from as far afield as Estonia, Holland and the UK, as well as the US and Canada. Gordon narrates their horticultural experiences – the motivations, challenges, successes and failures.

The author describes the essence of each very different garden, which are strong reflections of their owners' personalities and philosophies. The multi-faceted gardens, on properties varying from 5 acres to 40 acres, are largely self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables. This is a common value of all the owners, whose gardening experience on arriving in the valley ranged from beginner to expert - but all had to adapt to and learn to work with winters where heavy snowfall is the norm.

The garden styles and purposes range from therapeutic to market oriented and include Japanese (Victoria and Stephen), medicinal herbs (Edda), large scale art (Rabi'a), organic bedding plants (Brenda and Gail) and edible flowers (Pete and Eliza).

The book includes almost 20 recipes from the residents as well as cooking and eating tips. There are a number of informative sidebars (check out page 104 to find out what a WWOOFer is). "Favourite Friends" is a feature of each garden section.

Gordon includes gardening tips from each grower on topics, including Seeds and Cuttings, Mulching, Building-up Soil and Garden Tools amongst others.

For those who would like to know more, the book has a bibliography with selections by each gardener and also of the Slocan Valley.

The courage, hard work and commitment of the gardeners is very apparent in Gordon's warmly presented book – ideal for curling up with in front of a winter fire.

This beautifully photographed book is the fourth by Gordon, who lives on Gabriola Island. Photography is by Rod Currie and Gordon Quinton.

Reviewed by David Broomhead